

# FM TECHNOLOGY TO HELP YOU BREAK OUT OF THE 'CELLS'

Service Works Group is a global provider of facilities, property and space management (CAFM) software and the market leader in PPP operational management, here they explain why it is increasingly important to get reduce reliance on Excel spreadsheets and move onto more reliable software.

In today's business world, there is increasing demand to add value and innovation in every part of an organisation. For facilities managers, this presents the major challenge of delivering innovative solutions while maintaining effective daily operations and a high quality, cost-effective service. However, there is also a key opportunity to support the core business objectives, demonstrating excellent facilities management and raising the profile.

The changing role of facilities management into a strategic activity has created an increased need for the FM to have immediate, accurate, real time data at their fingertips. The captured data enables them to enhance operations and to provide meaningful information for the business that has a direct impact on workplace, productivity, engagement and perception.

Some facilities managers are still, however, working within the confines of email processes and inputting their valuable FM data into the cells of spreadsheets to manage their properties. In start-up businesses and small organisations, where there are low numbers of service issues, no risk of financial penalties for underperformance, and no

demands for complex reporting, Excel spreadsheets offer a low cost and easily accessible solution. But few organisations exist that do not have growth aspirations and, as a business develops, relying on spreadsheets as a primary source of information for FM, reactive and planned maintenance, and asset and performance management has severe limitations.

At a certain point, which is determined by factors such as whether the organisation expands into a large single site or becomes multi-site; whether the volume of service requests grows significantly; whether there is an increase in staff; or whether there is more need for external contractors, spreadsheets become unwieldy and unreliable. They can even become counterproductive to FM, causing it to lose impact and detracting from its business critical function.

There is also the added risk of the department, or even the company, falling into disrepute should the system cause a serious error in terms of service failure, lack of compliance, or health and safety breach. Spreadsheets leave organisations vulnerable to:

- **Fraud** – the inherent lack of controls, and difficulty in detection, allows the easy alteration of formulas, values, or dependencies
- **Susceptibility of human error** – this can damage confidence, result in losses, and increase risk through the entry of inaccurate data, duplication of data, or data redundancy

With the growth of agile working practices and as mobile working emerges as the most common trend in flexible working, FMs must adapt to meet the changing face of the workplace. If the organisation's offices and sites are scattered, and team members are separated by distance, it is even harder, with data scattered across different folders, workstations and geographical locations, to use spreadsheets to keep track of information. The risk of

duplication and lack of data integrity is also considerably higher.

Not only do spreadsheets lack scalability and heighten risk, they are a limited, stand-alone solution without the capability to assign, prioritise and escalate tasks, to send out jobs, to provide a watch-list with real time visibility of service calls from logging to completion, or to enable FM self-service. In most organisations, facilities management is a fast-paced and challenging environment, which can create major problems for generating KPI and SLA information and for producing meaningful, accurate reports in spreadsheet form.

A recent industry survey by, Service Works demonstrated that facilities management professionals are increasingly aware of the strategic benefits of using specialised software, rather than relying on standard business tools such as Excel spreadsheets. Two thirds of the respondents reported using their software for planned maintenance, reactive maintenance and asset management. The survey also highlighted an increase in the integration of FM technology with other business systems (BMS), finance, and health and safety systems emerging as the top three.

Great facilities have always contributed to an organisation's positive reputation and enhanced the customer experience, but now the facilities manager's role is developing into a strategic one that can help an organisation achieve competitive advantage. Facilities managers are increasingly assuming a pivotal role with a requirement to support the wider business in areas such as employee recruitment and retention, customer attraction and satisfaction, sustainability and energy reduction goals, health and safety and compliance, and re-enforcement of the brand and culture. The development of Business Information Modelling (BIM) and increasingly intelligent working environments are also travelling full steam ahead in the FM direction.

The support of a quality specialist software system is increasingly being recognised as a key enabler in the

smooth day-to-day running of service delivery, boosting efficiency, cost-effectiveness and productivity, and as an indispensable management tool. Facilities managers are not only driving out unnecessary costs, and improving services, they are maximising quality data to create effective workplace regimes and practices and supporting better business performance. FM software, with its offer of flexible, intuitive, and enabling technology, has become the facilities manager's greatest ally in the innovation, implementation, delivery and management of a new era of business-critical services. The use of spreadsheets for capturing FM information continues to lose relevance in the business world.

The latest white paper from Service Works provides guidance for FMs who wish to establish better processes, enhance services and make improved strategic and tactical decisions based on quality data. Entitled *Excel to FM Software – Making the Transition*, the white paper examines:

- The pros and cons of using spreadsheets alongside the business benefits of investing in FM software
- Key considerations that should be addressed before making the change to FM software
- Tips for making an effective business case for FM software
- How to make the change

It gives step-by-step guidance for implementing FM technology, from importing data to system setup, enabling FMs to deliver a proactive and dynamic facilities management service to meet the fast-paced demands of today's business world.

To receive your complimentary copy of the new white paper *Excel to FM Software – Making the Transition*, or for further information, please email [info@swg.com](mailto:info@swg.com).

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